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The Four Upper Rooms.

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AN ADDRESS

ON THE

WORK OF THE GRANDE LIGNE MISSION

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CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,

“Truth is often stranger than fiction,” says an old adage. There is often more poetry and romance, more of the wonderful and the marvellous in the history of certain individuals, or certain institutions, than can be found in many works of fiction. The lives of Job, of Joseph, of Moses, of Elijah, and Daniel were never surpassed, perhaps not equalled, by the most wonderful productions of genius, in the realm of fiction. And the wonderful story of Jesus and His love unquestionably towers infinitely above all other stories, whether real or fictitious, for its marvellous and supernatural character; and yet it is a true story.

The story I am attempting to tell you is one of those which the finger of God Himself has inscribed upon the pages of that wonderful book, the history of Christian Missions. I feel my utter inability to do it justice, a thing which no one could do in the space of time generally allotted to an address; but, since, in the Providence of God, I am called to undertake the pleasant task, I will endeavor to fulfil it with fidelity and accuracy.

Whether it be regarded as a mere chance, or as providential, it is nevertheless a notable fact that the story I am to tell you is closely connected with four different appartments, four upper rooms, which

will ever be held as sacred by those who are conversant with the facts which cluster around them. The first of these rooms is

THE UPPER ROOM IN JERUSALEM

where, the evening preceding his death, our Savior met with His Disciples, where the Last Supper was taken and His last words to them were spoken. It was in this room that Jesus, after His farewell address to the Twelve, offered that matchless prayer which is recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John, and in which He asks that His disciples, and all those who would believe on Him through their words, might be sanctified "through the truth," adding that God's word was truth. It was because the founders of the Grande-Ligne Mission believed, in their inmost heart, the truth implied in this request of the Savior, that they were not only willing, but anxious, to come over sea and land, at immense sacrifices, to the dark land of French Canada to bring the light of evangelical christianity to a people sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death. They were convinced that the truth from heaven, as revealed in the Word of God, and not human traditions, was the agency through which men's hearts could be renewed, and their souls made meet for an everlasting abode with Christ in glory.

THE SECOND UPPER ROOM

with which the work of the Grande-Ligne Mission is connected, is situated in that Jerusalem of French evangelical christianity, the beautiful city of Lausanne, Switzerland. Not many years before the sainted and martyred Matamoras, the Apostle of Spain, sought in Lousanne a refuge from the persecutions of the Spanish inquisition, in the year 1834, in that particular upper-room, a young woman,

on whose heart rested the burden of a great sorrow, beautiful and comely in form, graceful and most amiable in her manners, endowed lavishly with the rarest intellectual gifts, might have been seen prostrated before God and pouring out her soul before Him in terms like these : " Heavenly Father ! Thou hast taken away from me the dear companion of my life and mine only child. Here I am left alone in this desolate home. What does it all mean ? What hast Thou for me to do ? Lord whither Thou leadest I will go " ! Day after day, and week after week the solitary walls of her sanctuary of prayer and grief echoed and re-echoed with this agonizing prayer. About this time a letter, in the form of an appeal for missionaries, came from Montreal, Canada, to the friends of missions in Lausanne, and to this lady herself in particular. The author of this letter was the wife of Mr. Olivier, a former pastor of this young woman who, with his wife, had come to Canada to do missionary work, but was obliged to return home, on account of ill health, after a stay of only a year in Montreal. Taking this appeal as an answer to her prayers, Henrietta Feller, (for such was her name), bowing again in prayer in her room, selected among others as her " secret place " to meet her God, consecrated herself anew to His service, and resolved, before Him, to answer the Canadian call. In order to do this, the most tender ties of friendship and family relations were to be broken and the many objects of sympathy and help, among her poor and the afflicted, who looked to her as to an angel of mercy, were not to see her depart from among them without the profoundest sorrow, the keenness of which, however, was more than equalled by that of her own deep emotions which she experienced at the thought of leaving them forever. But, feeling she was only

following the biddings of her heavenly Father, she was prepared for the sacrifice ; and, taking her earthly possessions with her, she started at her own expense for the New World, trusting in God for the future.

In the fall of 1835 she landed in New York, after a stormy voyage. Sailing up the Hudson River, through Lake Champlain, and down the Richelieu River, she landed in St. Johns on the 29th of October. Having requested the Captain of the boat to let her know when the boundary line between Canada and the United States would be reached, as soon as this favor was granted, and they had entered Canadian waters, the devout missionary went on her knees ; and when, on the River shore, at St. Johns, she, for the first time, placed her foot on Canadian soil, she sought shelter from human eyes, behind a pile of lumber, and there, on the wet sand, and in the falling rain, she poured out her soul before God in behalf of the French-Canadians to whom she was bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We are thus brought to

THE THIRD UPPER ROOM.

This is situated at Grande-Ligne, and forms the attic of a small log-house. This room was separated in two by a partition of rough boards that one half of it might answer for sleeping-room, kitchen, and parlor, whilst the other half was to be used as a school-room. Here Mme. Feller, who had been accustomed to the comforts of city life, lived and toiled. She soon succeeded in gathering around her a few children to whom she taught reading and writing, but especially the blessed truths of the Gospel. After school hours, she spent her time visiting the houses of these children, and every

house to which she could find access in Grande-Ligne, to tell the story of the Cross, and give general instructions to the poor Canadian women who were, like their husbands, in a deplorable state of ignorance and superstition. Heedless of rain, mud, snow and cold, and undaunted by the opposition which she met in many houses, she toiled with the enthusiasm of a Carey, and a Judson, and with the faithful aid of the devoted missionary who had come with her, and whose story is scarcely less notable than hers, the Rev. Louis Roussy, she laid the solid foundations upon which was soon to be erected the superstructure of the G. L. Mission.

Banished from their field of labor, together with the thirteen families of their converts, by the tidal wave of persecution which surged against them during the time of the Rebellion of 1837, the missionaries returned, two months after, to face, with their small congregation, the most distressing poverty. This was caused by the pillage of the converts' houses and farms, during their exile, by the fanatics whose violence and murderous assaults had compelled the missionaries to flee. Mme. Feller resumed her school, and Mr. Roussy his evangelistic labors, and in the same year the first French evangelical church ever founded in Canada was organized with seven members, to whom nine others were added a few months later. Although to the eye of the common observer, the position in which Mme. Feller found herself, while occupying the log-house upper room, was so different to, and offered such painful contrast with that which she held in picturesque Switzerland, yet never did she experience more satisfaction and joy than she did here in the performance of her labors of love. It was while in this situation that she wrote to her beloved sister saying, among other things : " If you could see these children clustering

around us, as chickens under their mother's wings ; if you could hear those who have received Jesus in their hearts, praising Him for having sent me to teach them that they have souls, and that He is their Saviour ; if you could see their eagerness to attend the school and their desire for instruction ; if you could see these young minds, these young hearts, opening to receive the truth concerning 'the one thing needful,' I am sure you would bless our gracious God, who said to me : 'Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house into a land that I will show thee.' I cannot reckon up the proofs which the Lord has given me that I am where He wills me to be, and that it was through Him I left my beautiful country and those whom I love, assured of His approval, and as fully convinced as if I had seen it with the eyes of my flesh, that I did not go before, but followed Jesus in coming to this place. I live in peace and rest ; whatever may happen I cannot yield to anxiety. The almighty and loving Jesus says to me ! 'Be careful for nothing,' and thus I live before Him, and am like a little child. I wish I could express in words the repose which I enjoy ; but the peace of Jesus passeth all understanding. I cannot define or describe it, but can only tell you that it keeps my heart, my soul, my spirit in Jesus Christ : that I experience no void, no regret, no *ennui* ; the Lord leads me gently."

THE FOURTH UPPER ROOM.

Going up the first flight of stairs in the old building of the Grande-Ligne and Feller Institute, on reaching the second floor and turning to the right, we come presently to a room on the left, which we enter, and find ourselves in the apartment where Mme. Feller spent twenty-eight years of her

life. To hundreds of grateful hearts, this room is a sacred place. Many who are now in heaven, many more who are still on earth, some of them old men and women, others still in their prime, think of this upper room with the tenderest emotions. Here, for over a quarter of a century, young men, Mme. Feller's "boys," as she fondly called them, came for faithful admonition, for counsel, for sympathy and help, for instruction and prayer. Here many were born into the Kingdom of God, and that clear musical and sympathetic voice which was heard, years before, in the upper-room in Lausanne, pleaded at the mercy seat daily for saving grace, in behalf of some seeking soul. Here, many tears, tears of penitence, tears of faith and joy, were shed; and here, too, were spoken many parting words of wise council when "the boys" came to bid adieu to their benefactress. They seldom, if ever, went away without bending the knee in prayer with her, and without shedding tears of regret to leave one so good and so true. Here, too, came, from near and from far, heads of families, mothers, often fathers too, to seek advice and sympathy in their cares and trials; and here also the missionaries themselves were wont to come to refresh their hearts and strengthen their courage by holding sweet converse with their "mother in Israel."

In the month of March, 1868, in this room, Mme. Feller lay on her death bed. She spoke comparatively little, but she seemed deeply engaged with her thoughts. What, think you, was the burden of these thoughts, knowing as she did that the end must be near? Ah! who can picture to themselves the glory that must have filled that room, and the joy that must have filled that heart, as she reviewed the history of the past thirty-two years,

and contemplated the restfulness of that haven into which she was soon to enter? In her review of the past, upon what results of her work might her thoughts dwell? She could think that for the little log-house in which she began her work had been substituted two large and substantial stone buildings into which were received, annually, from seventy to eighty young people who came there to receive instruction in the ordinary branches of education and especially in the knowledge of spiritual truths. She could think that to the little congregation who worshipped thirty years before, in the lower part of the little log-house had been added no less than twenty other congregations where the Gospel of Christ was more or less regularly preached, and also of thirteen organized churches which had been added to that of Grande-Ligne. She could think of over two thousand young people as having passed from one to five years in the schools of the mission, many of them occupying respectable and even eminent positions in the church and in the world as ministers, evangelists, professors, teachers, physicians, lawyers, journalists, and, had she lived to the present time, she could have thought of one of her "boys" as a member of the Federal Parliament at Ottawa. She could also think of thirteen hundred persons having made a public profession of their faith in Christ by baptism and four thousand Roman Catholics who, since the establishment of the Mission, and through its instrumentality, had become Protestants. Surely, she could say with the aged Simeon in the Temple, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation," which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy people in Israel.